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SUBJECT: SERBIA: REFUGEE COORDINATOR WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT: MARCH 24-28, 2008

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UNHCR SERBIA: NOT THE RIGHT TIME TO DISCUSS DURABLE SOLUTIONS WITH GOS

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¶1. (SBU) On March 27, refcord met with UNHCR Serbia Senior Program Coordinator Angelita Cecere to discuss country operations planning. Cecere told refcord UNHCR Serbia submitted a two year budget (2008-2009) plan in March 2007 and this year planned only a few revisions to the original submission. Cecere said she and UNHCR Serbia Representative Lennart Kotsalainen would consult with key partners and GOS contacts this fall to discuss durable solutions for the remaining internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee caseload. Cecere said UNHCR representatives in the Western Balkans would meet this summer to discuss strategies for the region. In a March 26 email to refcord on country operations planning, Kotsalainen wrote, "It is extremely difficult at this point of time with upcoming elections in Serbia and the increasingly complex situation in Kosovo to have meaningful consultations on needed changes in our strategies." Referring to GOS unwillingness to consider integration of IDPs into Serbia along with return to Kosovo as a durable solution, he wrote, "... some changes will be required in our durable solutions strategy for Kosovo (both in terms of return and local integration) but it is not the right time to discuss this... with the Government."

UNHCR RECEIVES ONE MILLION EURO ROMA LEGAL ASSISTANCE GRANT FROM EU

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¶2. (SBU) Cecere told refcord March 27 UNHCR received a one million Euro 18 month grant for legal assistance to vulnerable Roma in the Balkans, to include Serbia (300,000 EUR), Kosovo (200,000 EUR,) Macedonia (150,000 EUR,) Montenegro (150,000 EUR) and Bosnia (150,000 EUR.) Cecere said the aim of the project was twofold: conduct a civil registration campaign aimed at registration of Roma children into birth registries and subsequent registration of unregistered parents, and provide direct free legal aid to the Roma population at large. According to Cecere, UNHCR Serbia will implement the project beginning May 6 in 20 select municipalities.

UNHCR SERBIA DISCUSSES JOVANOVIC CASE WITH KOSOVO MINISTRY

13. (SBU) On March 28, UNHCR Senior Protection Officer John Young and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Balkans Representative Anders Engberg met Assistant Minister for Kosovo Vuko Antonijevic to assure the Ministry UNHCR was doing everything possible to ensure Momcilo Jovanovic's rights were respected while in detention in Kosovo. Jovanovic, an IDP Serb, was arrested March 12 in Kosovo on suspicion of war crimes while participating in a DRC led, UNHCR funded go-and-see visit (GSV.) Following the meeting, Young told refcord that Antonijevic appreciated their efforts, but reminded them it was under UNHCR and DRC protection that Jovanovic was detained in the first place. According to Young, Antonijevic believed the detention was part of a larger plan by Kosovo authorities to undermine Serb returns. Young promised Antonijevic UNHCR Kosovo staff would continue to visit Jovanovic and would closely follow developments in the case. Antonijevic is scheduled to speak on the future of the returns process at UNHCR's April 11 IDP working group meeting. (Jovanovic was released from the Pristina Detention Center March 28 and is now under house arrest in Brestovic village in Kosovo's Peje/Pec municipality. USOP is closely following this case.)

VLADE DIVAC FOUNDATION OFF TO A GREAT START

14. (SBU) On March 28 refcord met with Ana Koeshall, new Executive Director of the Humanitarian Organization Divac (HOD), the foundation set up in late 2007 by retired National Basketball Association (NBA) player Vlade Divac and his spouse Snezana. According to Koeshall, the organization is the first private entity to focus on the displaced population in Serbia and has collected over one million euros for the provision of housing for refugees and IDPs still living in collective centers across Serbia. She said the organization was working closely with UNHCR, the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, which has pledged 500,000

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euros toward the effort. Koeshall, told refcord the HOD would focus its activities and fundraising efforts toward housing solutions this year, but would consider expanding its effort to start up and small income generation grants in subsequent years.  
MUNTER